

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

THE SIX-PARTY TALKS, THE RIGHT
SOLUTION TO THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF KOREA NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

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TITLE: The Six-Party Talks, The Right Solution To The Democratic People's Republic Of
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This paper will examine the current United States Government policy regarding the Nuclear Weapons Program of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Analysis will include a review of the current alternative policy actions and make an argument as to why the current U.S. policy of multi-lateral diplomacy consisting of the Six Party Talks format is the best way to approach the matter and bring about a negotiated solution.

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THE SIX-PARTY TALKS, THE RIGHT SOLUTION TO THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), commonly known in the West as North Korea, has chosen a path that threatens the United States (U.S.) and its neighbors in the region of Northeast Asia. More specifically, the DPRK nuclear weapons development program has placed the North Korean regime on a collision course with the U.S. and like-minded nations of the world. This paper will examine the current U.S. policy regarding the DPRK's program and its history. Analysis will include a review of the current alternative policy actions and make an argument as to why the current U.S. policy of multi-lateral diplomacy consisting of the Six Party Talks format is the best way to approach the matter and bring about a negotiated solution.

CURRENT U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The current U.S. government policy toward the DPRK requires the country to completely, verifiably, and irreversibly dismantle its nuclear programs.¹ There are numerous policy setting documents produced by the U.S. Government that address this issue. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (NSS) specifically mentions North Korea in chapter five, the chapter that spells out the policy to *Prevent Our Enemies From Threatening Us, Our Allies, And Our Friends With Weapons Of Mass Destruction* (WMD). North Korea is singled out as the world's principal purveyor of ballistic missiles, while testing increasingly capable missiles as they develop their own WMD arsenal.² The NSS previously in the chapter labels North Korea a "rogue state."³

The document *The National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction* does not specifically mention the DPRK, but clearly implies that North Korea is one of the hostile states that will require monitoring, counter proliferation measures and deterrence in order to manage the threat posed by the North Korean program.⁴ The *National Military Strategy of the United States of America* makes no specific mention of the [DPRK](#); however, it discusses WMD and hostile states in multiple paragraphs and, again through implication, alludes to the North Korean program.⁵ The above strategy documents put forth the fundamental guidance concerning the security of the United States. All three provide policy guidance on WMD proliferation and single out the DPRK program as one that must be dealt with.

The objective of the U.S. with regard to the DPRK nuclear weapons program is a nuclear free Korean peninsula. In the past eighteen months the President, the former Secretary of State, and the Secretary of Defense have articulated the U.S. position quite

clearly. President George W. Bush, speaking to an audience at the National Defense University on 11 February 2004 stated,

In the Pacific, North Korea has defied the world, has tested long-range ballistic missiles, admitted its possession of nuclear weapons, and now threatens to build more. Together with our partners in Asia, America is insisting that North Korea completely, verifiably, and irreversibly dismantle its nuclear programs. America has consistently brought these threats to the attention of international organizations. We're using every means of diplomacy to answer them. As for my part, I will continue to speak clearly on these threats. I will continue to call upon the world to confront these dangers, and to end them.⁶

Former Secretary of State Colin Powell, speaking in Jakarta, Indonesia on 2 July 2004 stated, "The firm bottom line for all six parties, and they have all said this, including the DPRK, is that we want a denuclearized Korean peninsula. It's in the best interest of the world, the region, the peninsula and North Korea."⁷ The Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, speaking to a town hall meeting in Ft. Campbell, Kentucky on 14 September 2004 was quoted as follows:

The United States of America has decided in the case of North Korea, recognizing that it's a repressive dictatorial system, that people are starving there, that they by their own announcement have a nuclear capability and are developing additional nuclear capabilities -- they're probably the premier proliferator of missile technology on the face of the Earth. By their own admission, they are working on a nuclear capability. The president made the judgment to go to the neighboring countries -- to Russia, to the People's Republic of China, Japan, South Korea -- and engage in talks with the North, tempting them to see if we can't get them to behave as a reasonably civilized country.⁸

As the preceding quotes make clear, three top leaders in the U.S. Government have spoken on the DPRK nuclear weapons issue, and are in agreement on what to do about it. The president has chosen a regional diplomatic effort to end the nuclear weapons program of the DPRK, and denuclearize the Korean peninsula. Articulated in strategic language, the policy ends of the U.S. Government require that the DPRK give up their nuclear weapons program and other nuclear programs completely in a verifiable and irreversible way. The U.S. Government has determined this issue to be in the national interest and will pursue it with a significant intensity. Before addressing the ways and the means options, it is prudent to briefly examine the history of the DPRK nuclear weapons program.

THE NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM

North Korea developed a nuclear reactor ostensibly for peaceful power generation purposes in the mid-1980's. The reactor, located at Yongbyon, was started in 1979 and completed in 1986.⁹ This reactor used graphite as a moderator and was cooled with pressurized carbon dioxide gas. The fuel consisted of uranium metal encased in an alloy of

magnesium and zirconium. A by-product of power production was spent uranium fuel, which was converted to plutonium 239 during the power generation reaction. The plutonium 239 could then be extracted (using chemical processes) to be used as weapons grade plutonium for atomic bomb development. The reactor at Yongbyon has similarities to reactors in Russian and U.S. nuclear weapons sites. A major difference is that the DPRK can more efficiently make plutonium than the water-cooled graphite reactors used in the Russian and U.S. programs.¹⁰ The reactor has not been without trouble; there is evidence of numerous setbacks and de-fuelings over the years. It has been surmised that the program could produce enough plutonium in one year to produce one weapon. Several estimates indicate North Korea may have somewhere between 7 and 22 kilograms of separated plutonium, roughly enough to fuel one or more, and possibly up to five, nuclear weapons.¹¹

NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY AND THE AGREED FRAMEWORK OF 1994

North Korea signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1985 after receiving international pressure; however, it did not sign its safeguards agreement until 1992. The DPRK has a long history of feet dragging and deception regarding international inspection of its programs. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) found the DPRK in non-compliance of its safeguards agreement throughout the nineties. By 1993, IAEA pressure for additional inspections led North Korea to announce its intention to withdraw from the NPT. As tensions mounted, the U.S. and North Korea began high-level talks that culminated in the Agreed Framework of 1994. That agreement obligated the DPRK not to produce fissile material at its declared nuclear facilities at Yongbyon. The preface of the agreement stated that its purpose was "an overall resolution of the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula."¹² The Agreed Framework of 1994 called for providing fuel oil and light-water reactor construction to North Korea in exchange for the halt of the DPRK plutonium weapons program. Under the Agreed Framework, the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO, the international body administering the Agreed Framework) was to provide heavy fuel oil and construct two light-water nuclear reactors as alternative energy sources for the North Koreans. Funding for the light-water nuclear reactors was provided by Japan, South Korea and the European Union. The heavy fuel oil funding came from the U.S. Department of Energy and was appropriated by the U.S. Congress.¹³ Unfortunately, events of the last two years have revealed that the DPRK continues to violate the agreement as revealed in the discussion that follows.

CURRENT CRISIS

In late 2002, it became evident to the U.S. intelligence establishment that the North Koreans had embarked upon a covert uranium enrichment program: a program that was in clear violation of the Agreed Framework, the North-South Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the Nuclear NPT, and the DPRK's Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA. In fact, the U.S. determined that North Korea had been pursuing the program for a number of years, even as it was negotiating with senior American officials to improve relations.¹⁴

In October of 2002, James A. Kelly the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs and the lead U.S. negotiator on the DPRK nuclear crisis, traveled to Pyongyang and confronted the North Koreans on their failure to comply. The DPRK officials admitted transgressions, claiming the hostile policies of the U.S. administration had left them no choice. In December 2002, the North Koreans expelled IAEA inspectors and began to reactivate the 5-megawatt reactor at Yongbyon. As Kelly noted in his 15 July 2004 testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the DPRK had announced in January 2003 its withdrawal from the NPT and, on several occasions in 2003, declared it had finished reprocessing its 8,000-plus existing spent fuel rods.¹⁵ If that is indeed the case, the DPRK could have produced enough fissile material for several additional nuclear weapons. Since then, the DPRK has stated it is strengthening what it calls its nuclear deterrent capability. In his testimony, Assistant Secretary Kelly, stated that he had been told in October 2002 by DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok-ju that the North Koreans had indeed embarked upon a covert uranium enrichment program and that North Korea also possessed "more powerful" weapons.¹⁶ The admission of the covert uranium enrichment program, a new development, demonstrated that the DPRK had not one, but two nuclear weapons programs underway. On 10 February 2005, the DPRK announced that they possessed nuclear weapons, and had produced them in order to "cope with the Bush administration's evermore undisguised policy to isolate and stifle the North."¹⁷

The policy of the U.S. has adhered to two principles on this issue. First, the U.S. seeks a complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of the DPRK's nuclear programs. Second, because North Korea's nuclear programs threaten its neighbors and the integrity of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the threat can best be dealt with through multi-lateral diplomacy.¹⁸

FINDING A DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION

Late in 2002, then Secretary Powell engaged the East Asian countries and persuaded the Chinese to propose a plan to hold five party talks in Pyongyang, to include China, Japan, Republic of South Korea (ROK), the DPRK and the United States. Initially the DPRK resisted, but eventually agreed to three party talks with China and the United States. Following discussions with Japan and the ROK, the U.S. participated in tri-lateral talks with China and the DPRK in Beijing during April 2003. It was during this meeting that the DPRK representative Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok-ju pulled Assistant Secretary Kelly aside and stated that North Korea had nuclear weapons, would not dismantle them, and might transfer or demonstrate them. Kelly strongly cautioned him against any escalation.¹⁹ Following the Three-Party talks, the U.S. conducted discussions with the Russians, Chinese, South Koreans and Japanese in an effort to bring together regional powers with an interest in a successful outcome to the situation. After these discussions (with the nations most affected by the DPRK's weapons program), all parties agreed to conduct Six-Party Talks including the U.S. and the DPRK. The first Six-Party Talks were conducted in August 2003.

During the August 2003 Six-Party Talks in Beijing, the other five parties asserted to North Korea very clearly that they would not accept North Korea's possession of nuclear arms. In response, the North Koreans threatened to demonstrate their nuclear weapons. The North Korean belligerence at the Six-Party Talks had the effect of isolating the DPRK. However, a second round of Six-Party Talks was held in February 2004 and all parties agreed to regularize the meetings. Additionally, all parties agreed to set up working groups to identify issues for discussion at future Six-Party Talks.²⁰

UNITED STATES PROPOSAL

The third round of Six-Party Talks were held in Beijing in June 2004 and have been the most successful to date. All parties were able to hold one-on-one discussions including a two- and-one-half-hour session between the DPRK and the United States. The DPRK, ROK, and the U.S. all presented proposals for resolution of the crisis. As might be expected, the U.S. and the ROK proposals were similar. Essentially the proposal the U.S. presented was developed in close coordination with the ROK and Japan. Under the terms of the U.S. proposal, the DPRK would, as a first step, commit to dismantling its nuclear programs. The parties would then reach agreement on a detailed implementation plan requiring, at a minimum, the supervised disabling, dismantlement and elimination of all nuclear-related facilities and materials; the removal of all nuclear weapons and weapons components,

centrifuge and other nuclear parts, fissile material and fuel rods; and the establishment of a long-term monitoring program.²¹

The main element of the U.S. proposal is a short initial preparatory period, of perhaps three months' duration, to prepare for the dismantlement and removal of the DPRK's nuclear programs. During that initial period, the DPRK would:

1. provide a complete listing of all its nuclear activities, and cease operations of all of its nuclear activities.
2. permit the securing of all fissile material and the monitoring of all fuel rods.
3. permit the publicly disclosed and observable destruction of all nuclear weapons/weapons components and key centrifuge parts.

These actions by the DPRK would be monitored and subject to international verification. It is important to emphasize that for the DPRK's actions to be credible and for the process to get underway, the North would need to include its uranium enrichment program which was revealed to Assistant Secretary Kelly in October of 2002 and existing weapons, as well as its plutonium program.

Under the U.S. proposal, as the DPRK carries out its commitments, the other parties to the talks would take some corresponding steps. The steps taken in response by the other five parties would be provisional or temporary in nature and would only yield lasting benefits to the DPRK after the dismantlement of its nuclear programs has been completed. The steps would include:

1. Upon agreement of the overall approach, including a DPRK agreement to dismantle all nuclear programs in a permanent and thorough manner subject to intrusive verification, non-U.S. parties would provide heavy fuel oil to the DPRK.
2. Upon acceptance of the DPRK declaration, the parties would:
 - a) provide provisional multilateral security assurances, which would become more enduring as the process proceeds.
 - b) begin a study to determine the energy requirements of the DPRK and how to meet them by non-nuclear energy programs,
 - c) begin a discussion of steps necessary to lift remaining economic sanctions on the DPRK, and for removal of the DPRK from the List of State Sponsors of Terrorism.

Assistant Secretary Kelly pointed out that it is reasonable to conclude that security assurances given through the multilateral Six-Party process would have considerably more

weight than would bilateral assurances. This commentary lends credence to the argument for using the Six-Party Talks as the most appropriate method for dealing with the crisis.²²

DPRK PROPOSAL

The current DPRK proposal restates its goal of a freeze for rewards program, including energy assistance, lifting of sanctions, and removal from the list of countries sponsoring terrorism.²³ The Pyongyang proposal lacks detail and is vague on a number of key elements. The DPRK's proposal is narrow in terms of the facilities covered, and it ignores the pre-2003 plutonium, nuclear weapons, and the uranium enrichment program. North Korea excludes the IAEA from verification, seeking to create a new verification regime from the Six-Party talk's participants. This unprecedented approach would be hard to set up and carry out, because the IAEA is the globally accepted norm for nuclear program verification processes. There are some positive elements in positions the North Koreans have mapped out. The DPRK claims that the freeze would be the first step on the path to nuclear dismantlement, not an end to itself, and on that point the U.S. agrees.

The U.S. and other parties have questions about Pyongyang's proposal, including what the scope of the freeze and dismantlement would be. Again, inclusion of the DPRK's uranium enrichment program is critical. The U.S. will continue to seek answers through the Six-Party process, though it has been made clear all along that the parties are not talking for the sake of talking, and there is an expectation for tangible progress to be made. To that end, the parties had agreed to hold the fourth round of talks by the end of September 2004, with a working group meeting in the interim, to prepare for the fourth round. To date, the U.S. and the DPRK are far from agreement. The next round of Six-Party Talks had been scheduled for fall 2004, however, as of early 2005, they have yet to occur.

ALTERNATIVES

The objective or end goal desired by the U.S., as articulated above is the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of the DPRK nuclear weapons program. While the way or "how to" that the U.S. Government has undertaken is the Six-Party discussions, there are alternative proposals on the table. The alternative proposals for dealing with the DPRK range from; (1) bilateral negotiations, (2) pre-emptive attack, (3) engagement with verification, (4) further economic sanctions, and (5) *fait accompli*? It will be useful to examine each in turn, with emphasis on why the Six-Party Talks are the most appropriate avenue for peaceful settlement.

BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS

The bilateral approach of direct U.S.–North Korean talks may appear on the surface to be an effective means of settling the crisis on the peninsula. Bilateral negotiations would involve the U.S. and the North Koreans engaging in direct face to face talks, excluding the other four members of the Six-Party Talks. This method is what the DPRK most desires; they have stated this desire repeatedly. Although it might appear to be a fruitful approach, rewarding the DPRK for their intransigence is not the correct policy. One on one negotiation between the U.S. and the DPRK will leave out the most important regional players, and more importantly, the two countries that may be able to persuade the North Koreans most, China and Russia. The U.S. position has always favored the multi-lateral approach using regional partners able to exert influence on the Pyongyang regime. Three of the Six-Party members are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, are among the strongest economies in the world, and bring legitimacy to the process with regard to world opinion.

PRE-EMPTIVE ATTACK

In their paper, *Attacking North Korea: Why War Might Be Preferred*, Australian National University Professors Robert Ayson and Brendan Taylor put forth the idea that while the risks and consequences of any military action on the Korean Peninsula are potentially formidable, an attack on the DPRK may be the best of a number of bad alternatives.²⁴ It is an interesting premise, one that most would believe to be improbable considering the present world situation. Central to their argument is the idea that any diplomatic “solutions” will only serve as delaying mechanisms and will eventually collapse under the weight of Pyongyang’s duplicity.²⁵ Most would agree there is precedence for this line of thinking. The North Koreans have proven in the past that they could not be trusted, for example they violated the 1994 Agreed Framework. Proponents of an attack may well argue, it is not so much North Korea’s weapons program itself, but the regime behind the program that is the real threat. Without a regime change, there is little hope of long-term security on and with the peninsula.²⁶ Certainly, the world has seen this situation before; the Iraqi regime was forced from power by military operations in early 2003. The current administration has shown that force is an option when the time comes for regime change. Five decades of stalemate on the peninsula, coupled with the current crisis, may be seen as a coherent argument for military action. The DPRK may be using the notion, whether real or fabricated, that their possession of weapons is a bargaining chip toward a negotiated settlement. Pyongyang has tended to use bellicose

diplomacy in the past and its revelation of “more powerful weapons” could be a chilling example of such diplomacy.

The main argument against a pre-emptive attack is the fact that the DPRK has nearly one million troops situated close to the demilitarized zone, along with the largest artillery force in the world, which can range much of Seoul. Any pre-emptive attack to destroy nuclear weapons and facilities would certainly provoke the DPRK to strike South Korea, and possibly touch off a resumption of the Korean War. Add to that, the Pyongyang claim of nuclear weapons, coupled with their means of delivery (the Taepodong missile), and the potential for nuclear war is high. Moreover, it would very difficult to target and destroy the nuclear facilities because the DPRK has most likely dispersed their most valuable assets deep underground. Therefore, the slim chance of destroying the nuclear sites is not worth the risk of igniting an all out war on the peninsula. As for regime change, removing the regime in North Korea (in the near term) will be much more difficult than it was in either Iraq or Afghanistan, because of the significant commitment of U.S. ground forces in support of Operations *Iraqi Freedom* and *Enduring Freedom*. There may come a time for military action, but progress can continue to be made at the Six-Party talks with the specter of military power used as a leverage point for forward movement.

ENGAGEMENT WITH VERIFICATION

Victor D. Cha, an Associate Professor of Government at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, and David C. Kang, an Associate Professor of Government at Dartmouth College and the Tuck School of Business, in their article *Can North Korea be Engaged? An Exchange*, discuss engagement with the DPRK regime as a viable option to the crisis.²⁷ Central to their thesis is the idea that the Kim Jong Il regime has been forced to institute economic reforms due to increasing famine and a broken economy. An engagement strategy that saturates the North Korean citizens with capitalist ideas and slowly changes their mindset while raising their living standards appreciably will bring the DPRK into the family of nations and foster change much like has happened in China over the past decade.²⁸

The problem with this proposal is the fact that the Pyongyang regime has not shown a strong propensity to open up to market reforms like the Chinese, and they have no economy to use as a method of gaining hard currency. Additionally, time is not on the side of those wishing to see reforms and engagement in the DPRK. The North Koreans are in need of hard currency, have claimed to possess nuclear weapons, have demonstrated the ability to produce more and the willingness to transfer to other buyers.²⁹ There are potentially more

than a couple of “customers” for their product, possibly other states seeking to join the nuclear club, or more likely, a cash rich Al-Qaeda. Over the years the DPRK’s record of compliance with international agreements has been proven to be problematic. The record for verification on a number of other fronts has not been met with success. The DPRK, Pakistan, India and Iran are strong examples of states with successful deception programs that were able to avoid international verification methods. Problematically, a strategy of pressure risks ending up with the outcome the world most hopes to avoid: a nuclear-armed North Korea backed into a corner and selling its weapons of mass destruction to terrorists because it has few other options.

ECONOMIC SANCTIONS

The idea of economic sanctions to force Pyongyang to give up their nuclear weapons is not new: the regime has been under some form of sanction from the West for nearly the better part of fifty years, whether through omission or commission. After North Korea invaded South Korea in June 1950, the United States imposed a complete trade embargo and financial prohibitions against North Korea. These sanctions have remained in place since then. The DPRK has shown a remarkable ability to work around those sanctions receiving goods from China and, early on from the former Soviet Union. That said, North Korea does not benefit from a viable economy, it obtains most cash flow through dubious means. History has proven that economic sanctions, especially regarding the Pyongyang regime, will not cause the DPRK leadership to modify their behavior. It is easy to deduce, especially in light of their deception with regard to the Agreed Framework of 1994, that regardless of the intentions of the West, Pyongyang will do what they want, most likely through deception.

There is the possibility that multi-lateral economic sanctions may be able to effectively force the Pyongyang regime to give up their nuclear program. The Chinese, who supply a major portion of the goods that are imported into North Korea, will have to be convinced that Chinese participation in sanctions will have a long term benefit to the PRC. Unfortunately, the DPRK’s policy of “military first” will induce greater suffering than there already is on the populace of North Korea, because the loss of goods from tighter sanctions will deprive and already starved populace even further.

With Pyongyang’s proven track record of deception and duplicity, sanctions have not had much effect on the regime itself, only the North Korean population, which continues to suffer at the expense of the militaristic viewpoint of those in power. Sanctions have proven

not to work effectively so far, and there is little evidence to indicate that they would work in the future.

FAIT ACCOMPLIS?

Dr. Taiho Lin, a professor of International Relations at the University of Munster, has put forth an interesting option in *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* entitled "Toward a Nuclear Peace in East Asia." In it he proposes that if the North Koreans have nuclear weapons, then they are the better for it because it allows them to negotiate for what they want from a position of strength. He believes the U.S. Government would dare not attack a Pyongyang regime armed with nuclear weapons. Lin states, "The feasible way out of this nuclear impasse would be to face and recognize the nuclear reality on the Korean Peninsula."³⁰ He surmises that if the DPRK were permitted to maintain its nuclear arsenal for security needs, then it would not use them first, thereby providing stability and, more importantly, regime survival, economic aids, trade deals, diplomatic recognition and even a non-aggression pact with the United States.³¹ Lin believes that nuclear weapons give the DPRK the ability to negotiate with power coupled with international prestige gained from becoming a member of the nuclear club. Lin further concludes that the U.S. should abandon a pre-emptive strategy because the nuclear crisis in North Korea is essentially a political issue. It would be misguided for the U.S. administration to use military force to solve the political problem. Instead the United States should recognize the nuclear reality in North Korea and negotiate with the DPRK.³²

When analyzing Lin's position, it appears that essentially, the U.S. administration has already considered the potential for the North Koreans to possess a weapon, and finds the possibility unacceptable. A more important factor is the other regional players, particularly the ROK and Japan, will find it necessary to develop their own nuclear weapons as a counter to those of the DPRK. This escalation may serve to further destabilize the region, leading to a regional arms race and cause concern in the PRC.

POSITIONS OF THE SIX PARTY TALKS MEMBERSHIP

The other members of the Six Party Talks have a vested interest in the outcome of the DPRK nuclear issue. All members are regional partners, some are former DPRK allies, two are UN Security Council members, three are economic powerhouses, and all support the multi-lateral settlement of the issue.

The Peoples Republic of China has served as the host for the Six Party talks until now. The failure of the Six Party Talks would be challenging to China in many ways. The Chinese share an 800 mile border with the DPRK. Any conflict on the peninsula or regime crisis with

the DPRK would result in a massive refugee flow into China, something the Chinese would be troubled to deal with. China would prefer to focus on its own economic development and build its reputation as a nation with regional influence and global respect. China has claimed less influence over the Pyongyang regime than the outside world understands, but sees its involvement and leadership at the Six Party Talks as a way to garner growing levels of trust from the U.S. Government while strengthening economic ties, leading to further development and influence with the United States. Additionally, failure of the talks' and a nuclear-armed North Korea, from the Chinese viewpoint, would cause the Japanese and South Koreans to re-assess their nuclear postures. This could possibly lead to a regionally destabilizing nuclear arms race in Asia, something that would certainly detract from Chinese aspirations with regard to their economic development and role in the world.³³

The position of the Russians has been one of political settlement. Their position is summarized by a quote from RF President V.V. Putin in the following statement: "We are against the DPRK's having nuclear weapons."³⁴ The Russians want a nuclear-free status on the Korean Peninsula, including strict compliance with the NPT, compliance with the 1994 Agreed Framework, security guarantees for the DPRK on the part of the U.S., resumption of humanitarian and economic aid programs for the North Koreans, and a constructive dialogue between all sides concerned.³⁵ The Putin Government supports the right of the DPRK to legitimately use nuclear power for peaceful purposes, contingent on two important conditions: Pyongyang must first return to the NPT; and second, it must closely cooperate with the IAEA inspection regime.³⁶ The Russians continue to maintain the best solution to the situation is a negotiated settlement using the Six Party Talks as a method to bring all interested parties to the table. Additionally, the Russians believe that the U.S. and the DPRK must have the will to settle their disputes peacefully without resorting to military confrontation.³⁷

For Japan, the DPRK nuclear threat is more troubling than for any other nation other than South Korea. Japan experienced a test of the North Korean's Taepodong missile over their homeland in 1998. This event has caused the Japanese to re-evaluate their defense posture. Japan would like a peaceful and stable Korean peninsula, but is constrained in its ability to directly impact change. According to its constitution, it is committed to a pacifist military position and relies on United States security protection. The threat posed by North Korea, however, brings the effectiveness of this security arrangement into question and has caused Japan to reassess its national security arrangements and consider a more assertive policy.³⁸ Japan is participating with the U.S. in the Ballistic Missile Defense program and has contributed forces to both Operations *Enduring Freedom* and *Iraqi Freedom*, signaling a shift

in their purely defensive philosophy. Students of this issue have even postulated that the inability to solve the North Korean nuclear issue will cause the Japanese to re-evaluate their position on nuclear weapons and to embark on a program to develop their own weapons as a counter to the DPRK.³⁹ However, the Japanese continue to remain a strong ally of the U.S. and are committed to a successful conclusion of the Six Party Talks. Their policy is in support of the U.S. position and they will continue to back the U.S. as long as they feel their security needs are being met.⁴⁰

The U.S.–ROK relationship is in transition. Prior to the DPRK's admission of nuclear programs, the relationship was on the decline, with the ROK government pressing for peaceful re-unification under former President Kim Dae Jung's Sunshine Policy, and many South Koreans calling for withdrawal of U.S. Army troops from the peninsula. In recent months, the position of the ROK government has stiffened because they understand that the DPRK still remains dangerous and now may be even more so with their recent revelations regarding their nuclear programs. After all, the South Koreans are most directly affected by the Pyongyang regime's intransigence and bellicose posturing. Their shared border continues to be one of the most heavily fortified regions of the world with over two million soldiers in close proximity to one another. The South Koreans understand the threat, are prepared to deal with it if they have to, but are committed to the Six Party Talks framework.⁴¹

CONCLUSION

After analysis of current options, what to do about the DPRK nuclear threat is clear. Certainly arguments can be made for pre-emptive military action, but the risks may be too great. Engagement is a viable option; there are other nations that have been brought into the family of nations as a result. However, the problem of the potential existing weapons and their eventual proliferation to terrorists calls for something more. Although the U.S. could choose to take a unilateral diplomatic approach, something the North Koreans have repeatedly demanded, the problem involves numerous countries in the region and in light of the ongoing Global War on Terror actually involves the world at large.⁴² That three member nations of the Six-Party Talks are members of the United Nations Security Council (the U.S., Russia and China) gives great credibility to the talks in the eyes of the greater world. Additionally, North Korea's closest neighbors are also included; therefore, all members of the talks have a vested interest in the outcome.

As of this writing, there appears to be little movement on resumption of the Six-Party Talks. The U.S. Government continues to believe that all six parties need to meet and move

forward with the issues. Recently, the DPRK has again admitted to possessing nuclear weapons. North Korea is stalling; citing the “hostile” actions of the U.S. Government prevents the return to the table. Mohamed ElBaradei, the chief of the IAEA said on 5 Jan 2005, “I hope we can start to move on the Korean issue, which is the number one proliferation threat we are facing.” He went on to say, “I would like to see the Six-Party Talks restarted as early as possible, I'd like to see by the end of the year a package agreement that takes care of the nuclear activities in North Korea and makes sure it is all under irreversible verification, that their security concerns are taken care and their humanitarian needs addressed.”⁴³ The IAEA chief is correct, the time is right for a resumption of the Six-Party talks.

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ENDNOTES

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² George W. Bush, "*The National Security Strategy Of The United States Of America* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, September 2002), 14.

³ Ibid., 13.

⁴ George W. Bush, "*The National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*," (Washington, D.C.: The White House, December 2002), 3-4.

⁵ Richard B. Myers, "*National Military Strategy of the United States of America*," (Washington, D.C.: The Pentagon, 2004), 1,2,10.

⁶ George W. Bush, "President Announces New Measures To Counter The Threat Of WMD," 11 February 2004; available from <<http://www.state.gov/t/np/rls/rm/29290pf.htm>>; Internet; accessed 5 October 2004.

⁷ Colin L. Powell, "Remarks to the Press by Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference Ministers," 1 July 2004; available from <<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2004&m=July&x=20040701181638ASesuarK0.1602747&t=xarchives/xarchitem.html>>; Internet, accessed 5 October 2004.

⁸ Donald H. Rumsfeld, "Secretary Rumsfeld Town Hall Meeting at Ft. Campbell, Ky," 14 September 2004; available from <<http://hongkong.usconsulate.gov/uscn/others/2004/091401.htm>>; Internet; accessed 6 October 2004.

⁹ Robert Alvarez, "North Korea: No Bygones at Yongbyon," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (July/August 2003): 41.

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¹¹ Ibid., 44.

¹² James A. Kelly, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, "Dealing With North Korea's Nuclear Programs," *Statement to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee*, 15 July 2004; available from <<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2004&m=July&x=20040715165732daornorahc0.5817224&t=xarchives/xarchitem.htm>>; Internet; accessed 6 October 2004.

¹³ Larry A. Niksch, Specialist, Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division, "North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program," Issue Brief for Congress, 28 April 2003. (Washington, D.C.: The Library of Congress, April 2003), 3, 10, 11.

¹⁴ Kelly.

¹⁵ Niksch, 2.

¹⁶ Niksch, 1.

¹⁷ The Associated Press, "North Korea admits having nuclear weapons," available from <http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2005-02-10-nkorea-nukes_x.htm>; Internet; accessed 10 March 2005.

¹⁸ Kelly.

¹⁹ Niksch, 1.

²⁰ Kelly.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Robert Ayson and Brendan Taylor, "Attacking North Korea: Why War Might Be Preferred," *Comparative Strategy* 23 (July-September 2004): 263-269.

²⁵ Ibid, 263.

²⁶ Ibid, 276.

²⁷ Victor D. Cha and David C. Kang, "Can North Korea be Engaged? An Exchange between Victor D. Cha and David C. Kang," *Survival* 46 (Summer 2004): 89-107.

²⁸ Ibid, 98.

²⁹ Niksch, 2.

³⁰ Taiho Lin, "Toward a Nuclear Peace in East Asia: Facing North Korea's Nuclear Reality," *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* 18(1) (Spring-Summer 2004): 72.

³¹ Ibid. 72.

³² Ibid, 74.

³³ Marta J. Bailey, "Another Engagement Strategy for North Korea," *The U.S. Army Professional Writing Collection*; available from<http://www.army.mil/professionalwriting/volumes/volume2/july_2004/7_04_1.html>; Internet; accessed 4 March 2005.

³⁴ Valery Denisov, "Nuclear Crisis on the Korean Peninsula," *International Affairs* 50 (Number 6, 2004): 47.

³⁵ Ibid. 48.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid, 49-50.

³⁸ Bailey.

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⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

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